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ABSTRACT

This report was based on telephone interviews with 86 individuals from 53 workplaces across Canada. The study sample included a diverse range of workplace types and sizes from both large and small communities. Of the eligible workplaces contacted, 93% were able to participate. The interview questions focused on why workplaces started basic skills programs, how the programs were organized, and how the programs affected the workplaces. The study confirmed that basic skills programs are having a dramatically positive impact on workplaces throughout Canada. The main motivator for starting basic skills programs was the need for reading, writing, and verbal communications resulting from training requirements and technological developments. Half the basic skills programs mentioned were coordinated by joint labor-management committees, and 47% were coordinated by the company alone. The following were among the benefits of basic skills programs cited by a majority of respondents: increase participants' confidence levels; influence workers' basic skills in ways that benefit the workplace; improve participants' ability to solve problems and work independently; help workplaces retain employees over time; and improve labor relations. (Appended are a list of participating workplaces and unions and the survey questionnaire.) (MN)

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The Impact of Basic Skills Programs on Canadian Workplaces

Results of a National Study for ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation

By Ellen Long

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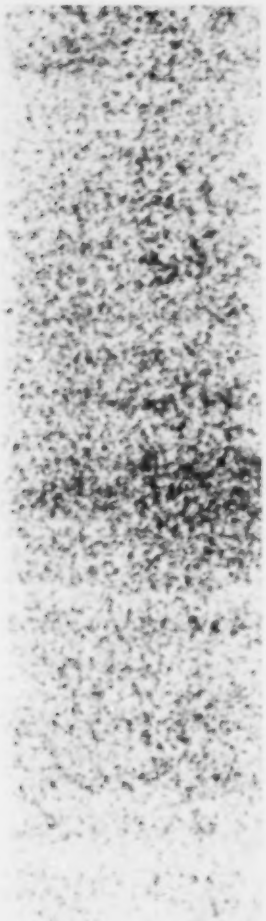

The Impact of Basic Skills Programs on Canadian Workplaces

Results of a National Study for ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation

By Ellen Long
Research Consultant

September 1997
2nd Edition

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Forward

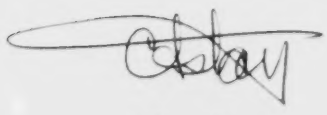
One of the biggest challenges that we have faced in marketing basic skills programs in the Canadian workplace is responding to concerns about the demonstrated impacts of basic skills education. Business often demands demonstrated, measurable benefits to justify involvement in the delivery or support of basic skills programs. Although we often discuss this issue in relation to business, labour too needs data to support prioritizing basic skills education on their agenda.

This research study confirms that the return on investment in basic skills education and training is very real. More importantly it shows that the impacts of programs go well beyond the return on a financial investment: it recognizes that all stakeholders make investments in the program and all stakeholders experience positive impacts.

It is our hope that this research will be useful in helping to secure basic skills education's position on the training agenda of Canadian businesses and labour organizations.

Our sincere appreciation to the individuals who agreed to give their time and share their experiences, and to the members of the WEC Council who helped in the development of the research project. Our special thanks to Ellen Long for her commitment to this project. Thank you also to Julia Budahazy who conducted our French interviews and to Ellie Robinson and Jessica Mann for their creative design work. Finally our thanks to our partners at HRDC who have provided valuable counsel and financial support to ABC CANADA's Workplace Education Centre.

Sincerely,



Colleen Albiston
Executive Director
ABC CANADA
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Executive Summary

Canadian promoters of workplace basic skills programs are commonly asked for evidence about the impact of programs on the workplace. Even with mounting information on the need for a more literate workforce, program promotion has become more difficult. Companies are increasingly focused on bottom-line considerations. "What," they ask, "is the payback for us?"

Though there is a substantial body of literature about workplace literacy, virtually none is Canadian, and very little is in a form that would be useful for promoting programs to sceptical workplaces. ABC CANADA hopes that the current study will provide information for effective, peer-based promotional strategies that will be useful in a broad range of contexts.

This report is based on the results of telephone interviews with 86 individuals from 53 workplaces across Canada. The study includes a diverse range of workplace types and sizes from both large and small communities. Every attempt was made to interview an employer and an employee representative from each workplace. Ninety-three percent of the eligible workplaces contacted were able to participate. Respondents were asked to describe the motivations of their workplaces for starting basic skills programs; the ways in which their workplaces organize the programs; and the impact of the programs on their workplaces.

Based on this study of 53 workplaces, it can be stated without reservation, that basic skills programs are having a dramatically positive impact on workplaces in Canada. Regardless of their position – whether company owners, human resources people, labour representatives, or participants themselves – the word is the same: workplace basic skills programs work. Representatives from all levels, and from all types of workplaces concur that basic skills education influences not only soft, "warm fuzzy" factors such as confidence levels, but also hard, bottom-line factors as well.

Study highlights:

- Central among the motivators for Canadian workplaces to start basic skills programs is the increased need for reading, writing, and verbal communication due to training requirements and technological developments.
- Half of workplace basic skills programs are coordinated by joint labour-management committees. A further 47% are coordinated by the company alone, through its training department (in 12% of cases) or by appointed individuals (in 35% of cases).
- In 96% of the workplaces surveyed, employees enter the basic skills programs on a voluntary basis.
- Over half the workplace basic skills programs are held on a combination of employer and employee time. In 32% of the workplaces, programs are held on employee time alone. The remaining 17% of programs are on employer time.
- Ninety-seven percent of respondents report that basic skills programs increase the confidence level of program participants.
- Ninety-four percent of respondents state that basic skills programs positively influence participants reading, writing and oral communication skills in ways that benefit the workplace.

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- Eighty-seven percent of respondents believe that basic skills programs exert an independent, and positive influence on participants' ability to problem-solve.

- Ninety percent of respondents indicate that employees who take basic skills programs have an increased ability to work independently.

- Eighty-seven percent of respondents say that programs impact positively on participants' ability to use workplace-based technology.

- Eighty-five percent of respondents report that basic skills programs enhance participants' ability to work within a team-based model.

- Eighty-two percent of respondents link increased health and safety with their workplace's basic skills program.

- Close to 90% percent of respondents indicate that employees are more promotable as a result of basic skills programs.

- Sixty-three percent of respondents report that basic skills programs help workplaces to retain employees over time.

- Ninety-three percent of respondents report that basic skills programs help to increase employee morale. Program participants feel better about their workplace, and about the unions that represent them.

- Many respondents stated that basic skills programs help remove barriers in the workplace based on age, sex, race and language.

- Eighty-five percent of company and employee representatives concur that basic skills programs have improved labour relations in their workplaces. Improved labour relations are particularly pronounced in large urban centres.

- Close to 80% of the respondents report that their workplaces have seen increased productivity because of the basic skills programs.

- Two-thirds of respondents have seen reduced error rates in people's work.

- Eighty-five percent of respondents have seen increases in the quality of people's work.

- Seventy-three percent of respondents have seen increases in work effort.

- All respondents agree that workplace basic skills programs are a good training investment and would recommend them to other workplaces.

- Central among the barriers to workplaces starting basic skills programs are perceived cost; lack of awareness of the need for a program; literacy needs being hidden by employees; companies not feeling responsible; lack of understanding about the outcome of programs; and mistrust between labour and management.

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I – Introduction

Canadian promoters of workplace basic skills programs are commonly asked for evidence about the impact of programs on the workplace. Even with mounting information on the need for a more literate workforce,[1] program promotion has become more difficult. Companies are increasingly focused on bottom line considerations. "*What,*" they ask, "*is the payback for us?*"

Though there is a substantial body of literature about workplace literacy, virtually none is Canadian, and very little is in a form that would be useful for promoting programs to sceptical workplaces. For example, many formal studies focus either on cognitive outcomes like increases in test scores among participants, or on the relationship between education and occupational attainment of individual workers. Employers, focused on the particulars of their workplaces, are unlikely to be swayed by this type of research.

Further, much of the existing research is descriptive and anecdotal where claims about the links between the programs and workplace impacts are assumed rather than demonstrated. Frustratingly, studies which do attempt more quantitative measures are often questionable because they are unable to separate effectively such factors as internal restructuring and external market forces.[2] The most common type of research is in the form of case studies which, by definition, are hard to compare and quantify for presentational purposes.

In considering how it might contribute to the field of promotion, ABC CANADA initially thought of conducting a rigorous case study of one workplace. Although such an endeavour would be valuable, it was thought that a broad-based, national overview study would most effectively equip Canadian program promoters who work in a broad range of contexts. A unique strength of the current study is that it includes a large number of workplaces (53) and a large range of stakeholders. Because a volume of workplaces were studied using identical measures, the results can be readily (and fairly) reported in quantitative form.

When stakeholders in a workplace are not yet convinced of the benefits of basic skills programs, they tend to ask for "hard measures." Ironically, it may not be hard measures that convince people. In fact, if stakeholders are uncertain about spending resources and time on a basic skills program, they are not very likely to be convinced by a narrowly defined, quantitative measure from one company (e.g., there was a 5% reduction of the scrap metal heap at the end of the program). They are far more likely to be convinced by large numbers of their peers saying, "*We know it's been worth it. We can't measure it exactly, but we know the program works. Our company has benefited.*"

ABC CANADA hopes that the current study will provide information for effective, peer-based promotional strategies that will be useful in a broad range of contexts.

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[1] See *Reading the Future, A Portrait of Literacy in Canada*, International Adult Literacy Survey, Statistics Canada, 1996.

[2] For the relatively few exceptions to this, and for a literature review, see "The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace," The Conference Board of Canada, 1997.

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II – Methodology and sample

The current study conducted telephone interviews with 86 individuals from 53 workplaces across Canada (see Appendix A for a list of participating workplaces and unions). The questionnaire (see Appendix B) asked respondents to describe the motivations of their workplaces for starting basic skills programs; the ways in which their workplaces organize the programs; and the impact of the programs on the workplaces. Respondents were also asked about barriers to starting programs. The interviews took between 20 and 60 minutes and were conducted between February and April of 1997.

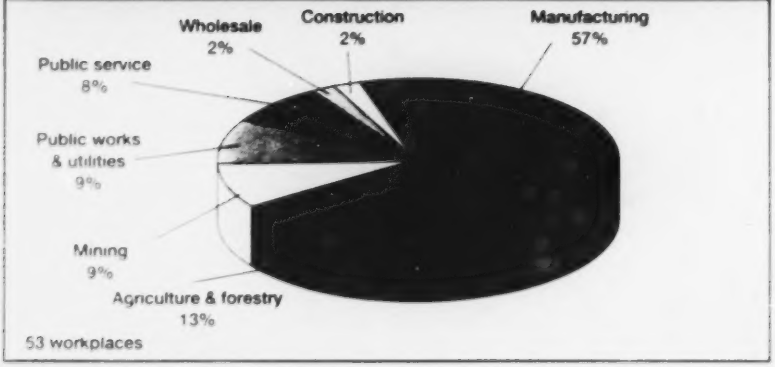
Key literacy representatives from each province and one territory[3] provided ABC CANADA with the lists of workplaces for the study (Table 1). Ninety-three percent of the eligible workplaces contacted were able to participate. The study includes workplaces from a diverse range of workplace types (Figure 1) sizes (Figure 2), and communities (Figure 3). Every attempt was made to interview both an employer and an employee representative in each workplace. Forty-one percent of respondents were employee representatives and 59% were company representatives. The workplace programs were delivered by a wide range of deliverers (Figure 4). All but three of the programs had been running for at least a year at the time of the interviews.

TABLE 1
How many workplaces from each province and territory are included?

PROVINCE	COUNT
New Brunswick	3
Nova Scotia	2
Prince Edward Island	2
Newfoundland	2
Quebec*	10
Ontario	15
Manitoba	4
Saskatchewan	3
Alberta	4
British Columbia	7
North West Territories	1
Total	53

*Quebec interviews were conducted in French and were translated into English for this report.

FIGURE 1
What industries do the workplaces represent?



[3] Programs from the Yukon could not be included because they were only in the planning stages at the time of this study.

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FIGURE 2
What size are the workplaces?

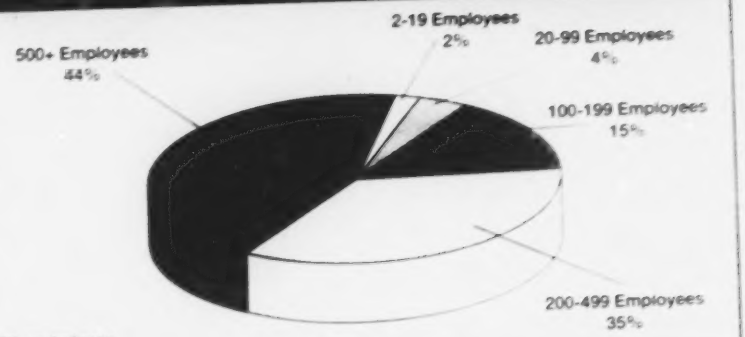
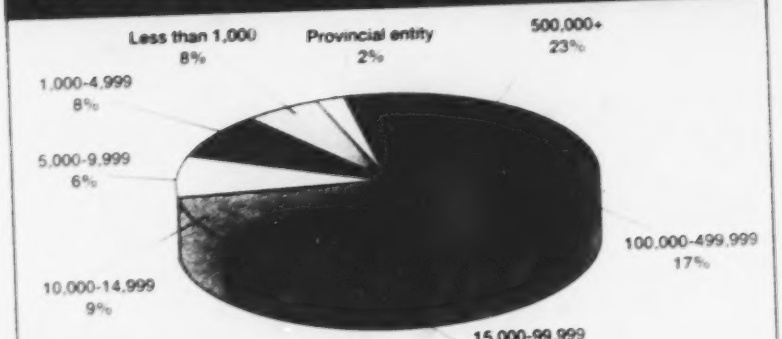
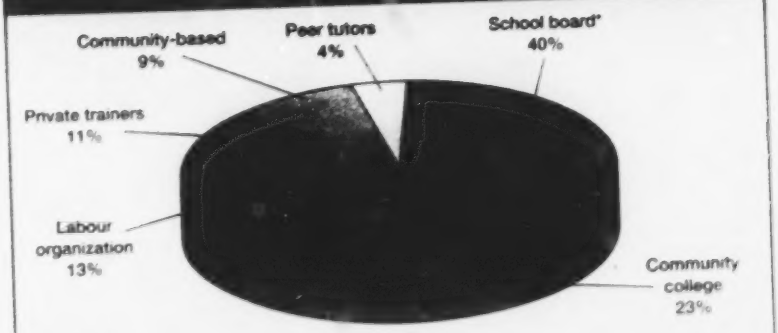


FIGURE 3
In what size of communities are the workplaces located?



The numbers in this chart do not add to 100 due to rounding off.

FIGURE 4
Who delivers the programs



*This figure includes provincial ministries of education.

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There are many factors which intervene between a workplace basic skills program and the production process. Many of the workplaces interviewed have been undergoing large-scale internal restructuring. For example, many workplaces have introduced new technology, continuous improvement programs, team-based work organization, and in a few cases ISO certification. The theme of downsizing was recurrent in the interviews. Rather than attempting to separate out the effects of these and other factors,[1] respondents were asked, with all things considered, whether the basic skills programs positively influenced the workplace in various ways.

This study did not involve going into workplaces with a stopwatch and yardstick to measure the impact of programs. Aside from time considerations (and the daunting task of separating out internal and external factors) it is unlikely that the companies would have agreed to participate in such an endeavour. In fact, when asked if their workplaces measure the impact of programs in any formal, quantitative sense, close to 90% of respondents report that no such attempts are made.[2] Respondents gave two main reasons for this. First, they stated that it was simply unnecessary to formally measure impacts:

> ***"I know what I see ... I don't have the bureaucracy or the inclination to measure. I've literally seen people come out of the ditches and become high tech operators. I don't have finite measures but I know it's there."***
> Michael McGill, Town Engineer, Town of Truro, NS.

> ***"We just know it works ... I can see it every day."***
> Allie Craswell, Plant Manager, Avon Foods Inc., Berwick, NS.

> ***"Everyone can see the impact."***
> Danny Cavanagh, Vice-president, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 734, Town of Truro, NS.

> ***"It's hard to measure pay-backs. A lot is intangible ... but I know it's there ... it goes beyond that."***
> Chuck Stormer, Vice-president of Operations, Decoustics, Etobicoke, ON.

Second, they spoke of the undesirable dynamics that would emerge if quantitative productivity measurements were attempted:

> ***"We made a conscious choice not to formally measure ... the confidentiality is so important."***
> Margaret Dodson, Learner Centre Assistant, Regina Public Library, Regina, SK.

> ***"We don't want individuals to be watched over."***
> Mr. Beauchemin, Union Representative for Central du Syndicat Democratique, Locale 3098, Director of Prevention, Weston's Bakery, Longeuil, PQ.

> ***"We didn't want to ... it's so easy to get sidetracked on that ... we left it alone because of people's experiences in the school system."***
> Byron Norman, Former Director of the Alberta Power Employee Association, Steam Plant Operator, Alberta Power, Forestburg, AB.

It is relevant that 84% of the respondents report that their workplaces do not formally measure the impact of other types of training either. Those in the field of promoting workplace programs should feel able to tactfully point this out when being quizzed for hard measures on the impact of basic skills programs.

[1] Other factors not controlled for include whether workplace manuals had been written into clear language, and whether management and supervisors had taken effective communication or diversity training courses.

[2] This finding is in keeping with the recent experiences of The Conference Board of Canada when it attempted to collect hard measures from Canadian businesses.

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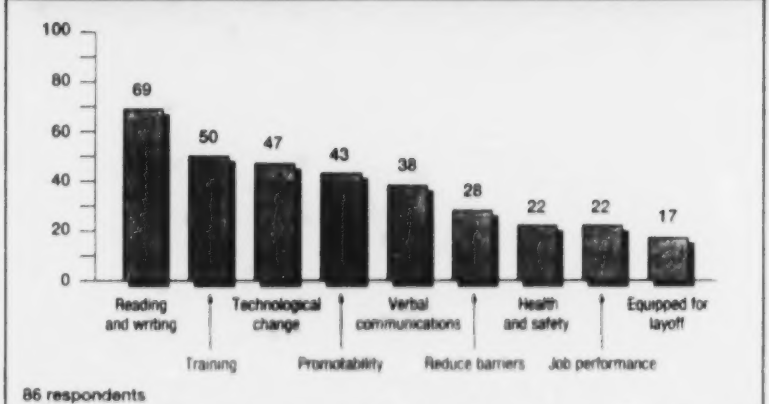
III-Findings

This section deals with three main areas: the motivations of workplaces for starting basic skills programs; the ways in which workplaces organize the programs; and the impacts of the programs on the workplace. The section ends with a discussion of barriers to starting programs and with respondents' advice to other workplaces. Statistical analysis was performed to look for any significant differences in responses by type and size of workplace, region, type of respondent, and length of program. Unless otherwise indicated, readers can assume that the percentages reported in this section are representative of the whole range of workplaces and respondents.

Why do workplaces start basic skills programs?

Figure 5 illustrates the wide range of factors that motivate workplaces to start basic skills programs. The categories in these figures were created from narrative responses to open-ended questions. Most of the percentages would likely be higher if respondents had been specifically prompted. The value of the figures is less important than the overall themes and patterns, all of which should be considered in the creation of presentations or promotional materials.

Figure 5
Motivations for starting programs



Motivations

Literacy Skills

The most common motivator, cited by 69% of respondents, is that jobs are requiring increasingly higher levels of reading and writing.

> ***"There was a huge increase at every level in the amount of reading material that people had to process: company policies; training manuals in a self-learning environment; government policy."***
> Dave Nichols, Training Specialist, Imperial Oil, Medicine Hat, AB

Thirty-eight percent of respondents said that their workplaces were motivated by the need for increased verbal communication skills (listening and speaking).

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"It used to be that one person could interpret for 14 others, but it's not like that now."
Frank Bajc, Plant Manager, Alberta Power, Forestburg, AB.

Further Training

The need for more skills in reading, writing and verbal communication is partly fuelled by the workplaces' need for employees to engage successfully in workplace training. Fifty percent of respondents said their workplaces were motivated by this factor.

"Seventy percent of those who needed certification couldn't get it because of testing."
Cynthia Selley, Training and Development Manager, Department of Transportation and Corporate Office, Boeing, Winnipeg, MB.

"We wanted people to take hydraulics courses and electrical courses ... people were approached and they wouldn't go or they didn't qualify for the prerequisites."
Doug Ellis, Purchasing Manager and Program Tutor, Seaman's Beverages, Charlottetown, PEI.

"We want people to be able to learn more from other types of training."
Daniel Careau, Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator, Nanisivic Mines, Nanisivic, NWT.

"We saw that people were dropping out of other training programs."
Coordonnatrice Formation Organizational, CAMCO, Montréal, PQ.

"We had cases of long term people writing technical exams, following training, and failing."
Byron Norman, Former Director of the Alberta Power Employee Association, Steam Plant Operator, Alberta Power, Forestburg, AB.

"We were qualifying for ISO and found people had difficulty writing the exams ... they couldn't fill out the forms."
François Gélinas, Coordinator of Training and Industrial Relations, Kruger Trois Rivieres, Trois Rivieres, PQ.

Technological Change

Another motivator, highly related to training, is technological change. Forty-seven percent of respondents cited technological change as a motivator for their workplace to start a basic skills program.

"We were starting a new factory...everything was being automated."
Company Representative, Weston's Bakery, Longueil, PQ.

"In 1992 we changed the technology on the assembly lines and we saw signs that people had some problems."
Alain Anglehart, President du Syndicat Canadien d'Energie et du Papier, locale 3000, Industries Norbord, Abitibi West La Sarre, PQ.

"The company is getting more automated ... there's more reading. If I were applying today, I wouldn't be hired without a grade 12 ... I only have grade eight."
Betty Gillis, Food Processing Worker and Program Participant, Cavendish Farms, New Annan, PEI.

"We installed some new technology and realized through training programs that people were missing basic skills."
Josee Ploutle, Training Coordinator, Kraft Canada Inc., Montreal, PQ.

"With the present changes, the miners had to get basic skills to stay with the company. The world has taken a 180 degree turn."
Alain Gilbert, President Du Syndicat des metallos Locale 6131, Mines Noranda Affinerie CCR, Matagami, PQ.

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Promotability

Forty-three percent of respondents said their workplaces were motivated by a desire for employees to be more promotable. This motivation was mentioned more often among employee representatives (60%) than employer representatives (31%).

"We believe that it'll help with job protection and promotability."
Ron Wagner, Plant Chair, Union, Canfor Forest Products, Fort St John, BC.

"People have to do a math and reading comprehension test to get promotions."
Betty Gillis, Food Processing Worker and Program Participant, Cavendish Farms, New Annan, PEI.

"We trained our workers [following automation] because they already had the experience and we wanted to keep them."
Company Representative, Weston's Bakery, Longeuil, PQ.

"We weren't able to promote employees. For example, we had truck drivers who weren't able to do an air-brakes course."
Judy Rogers, Deputy City Manager, City of Vancouver, BC.

"We hope that people will get their diplomas and establish career goals within the company."
Shelly Kocjan, Human Resources Coordinator, Lakefield Research, Lakefield, ON.

Participation In Union Activities

Twenty-eight percent of employee representatives made a link between basic skills education and increased ability to comprehend union rights.

"We wanted to ensure our members knew their rights under the collective agreement."
Karen Kindred, Administration Coordinator, CUPE Local 1004, City of Vancouver - Outside Workers, Vancouver, BC.

"There are more grievances when people can't communicate."
Ed Thomas, Chair of Education Committee, City of Hamilton, ON.

Equity Barriers

A further 28% of all respondents said that, among the motivators, was a desire on the part of the workplace to reduce barriers based on age, sex, language, and race.

"We introduced a lot of new technology all at once and put in high requirements for education. This caused unanticipated stress and problems in the workplace because older, long-standing workers didn't meet the new education requirements for new jobs. There was lots of tension and resentment of workers hired off the street."
Allie Craswell, Plant Manager, Avon Foods Inc., Berwick, NS.

"We wanted to involve non-traditional people in non-traditional jobs. Many aboriginal people don't have high school diplomas because of lack of schools in their communities. Then there's the whole history of residential schools."
Frank Bajc, Plant Manager, Alberta Power, Forestburg, AB.

"We see this as an equity issue. We have an aggressive recruitment strategy because of our [geographical] location. We hope to promote from within."
Darrell Bast, Supervisor, Employee Relations, CAMECO-Rabbit Lake Mine, Rabbit Lake, SK.

"We wanted to improve communication on the shop floor. People were only dealing within their own language groups."
Lindsay Scott, Senior Training Consultant, Westinghouse, Hamilton, ON.

"There are a number of equity issues. From the union perspective, we wanted people to properly assimilate into the workplace culturally, to be able to communicate."
Don Allan, President, United Steel Workers of America, Local 3239, Ancast, Winnipeg, MB.

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Health and Safety

Increasing workplace health and safety was cited as a motivator by 22% of the workplaces.

> ***"There are new regulations on environmental issues ... we must now show that due diligence was exercised ... there's no excuse to say someone didn't know."***
> Frank Bajc, Plant Manager, Alberta Power, Forestburg, AB.

> ***"From the union perspective, we want to be sure that immigrant workers understand the right to refuse unsafe work."***
> Don Allan, President, United Steel Workers of America, Local 3239, Ancast, Winnipeg, MB.

> ***"Now with increased health and safety regulations, people need more training."***
> Don Allan, President, United Steel Workers of America, Local 3239, Ancast, Winnipeg, MB.

> ***"We don't know for sure how [many accidents are] related to poor reading ... but my gut tells me there is a relationship."***
> Lloyd Campbell, Senior Advisor, Organizational Development Group, Human Resources Department, Syncrude Canada Ltd., Fort McMurray, AB.

Job Performance

Direct mention of job performance was made by 22% of workplaces.

> ***"We recognized a need for upgrading...you could see problems in people's work...for example, problems taking inventory, trouble reading memos."***
> Doug Ellis, Purchasing Manager and Program Tutor, Seaman's Beverages, Charlottetown, PEI.

> ***"There was a need for a better understanding of the layout of patterns in steel manufacturing. People needed basic math to deal with custom work."***
> Gilles Rouleau, Owner, Manager, Rovan Steel, Sault Ste. Marie, ON.

The theme of downsizing and plant closure ran through many of the interviews. Seventeen percent of respondents said that programs were initiated partly to help employees find other work in the event of layoff.

> ***"I wanted to ensure that the workers could find new jobs if need be."***
> Sylvain Roy, Union Representative, Bestar, Lac Magantic, PQ.

> ***"We wanted people to be able to move laterally within the industry...and just to have a higher ability to find other work if they're laid off."***
> Ron Wagner, Plant Chair, Canfor Forest Products, Fort St John, BC.

Finally, many respondents spoke of more general motivations which do not fall into the above categories.

> ***"We wanted to make broad cultural changes in the mind-set of the workplace ... people are no longer required to check their brain at the door."***
> Bill Stephaniuk, MacMillan Bloedel, New Westminister, BC.

> ***"We wanted people to think and be confident in their jobs."***
> Brenda Whitman, Treasurer, Joint Workplace Training Committee, BICC Pyrotenax, Trenton, ON.

> ***"We had to modernize to get a competitive edge in the global economy."***
> Twyla Hurley, Program Coordinator, Crestbrook Forest Industries, Cranbrook, BC.

> ***"We wanted to create a less frustrating work environment ... to build bridges across departments."***
> Judy Rogers, Deputy City Manager, City of Vancouver, BC.

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While many of the motivations respondents spoke of were particular enough to be categorized, many were too holistic or intangible to quantify easily. Many workplaces are clearly motivated by higher educational and humanitarian ideals.

How do workplaces organize basic skills programs?

The 53 workplaces in this study organized programs in a wide variety of ways. Programs were initiated 24% of the time by the company, 33% by the union, and 29% by the company and the union, together. Fourteen percent of the programs were initiated by an educational group who proposed them to the workplaces.

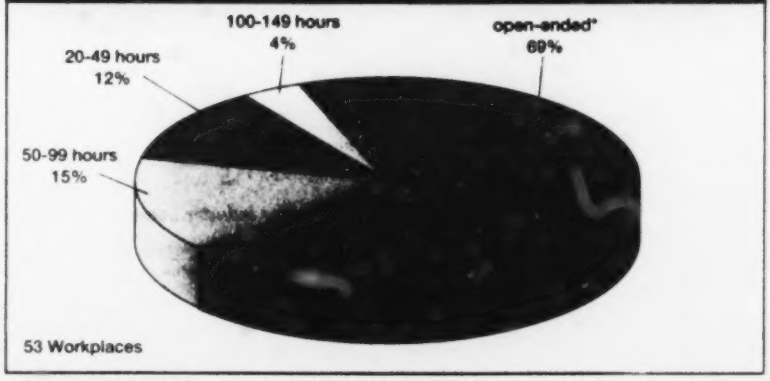
Once initiated, 50% of the programs are jointly coordinated by labour and management committees. A further 47% are coordinated by the company only, through its training department (in 12% of cases) or by appointed individuals (in 35% of cases).

In 96% of the workplaces, employees enter the basic skills programs on a voluntary basis. Though unprompted, many respondents stressed the critical importance of programs being voluntary.

Over half of the programs are held on a combination of employer and employee time. In 32% of the workplaces, programs are held on employee time alone. The remaining 17% of programs are on employer time. Aside from whose time the programs are held on, 70% of workplaces offer incentives to program participants: books, materials, and tuition where applicable.

Classes are held in a variety of settings (on-site and off-site) and at inventive times (to accommodate schedules). Figure 6 shows how long the classes run. Most typical is an open-ended situation where participants can study on an ongoing basis (69%). The remaining 31% of programs are time-limited, ranging from 20 to 149 hours.

Figure 6
How long are the classroom sessions?



*This figure includes provincial ministries of education.

What are the impacts of basic skills programs?

Based on this study of 53 workplaces, it can be stated without reservation, that basic skills programs are having a dramatically positive impact on workplaces in Canada. Regardless of their position—whether company owners, human resources people, labour representatives, or participants themselves – the word is the same: workplace basic skills programs work. Representatives from all levels, and from all types of workplaces concur that basic skills education influences not only soft, "warm fuzzy" factors such as confidence levels, but also hard, bottom line factors as well.

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This study measured program impacts in two ways. First, respondents were asked two simple, open-ended questions: "Have you seen any of the outcomes that you had hoped for?" and, "Have you seen other changes or differences in the workplace that you think might be related to the program?" In addition to these open-ended questions which netted rich narrative responses, the respondents were asked directly about a number of specific areas of potential impact: confidence, communication skills, problem-solving, ability to work independently, ability to use technology, team work, health and safety, promotability, retention of workers, employee morale, labour relations, productivity, reduced error rates, quality of work, and work effort.

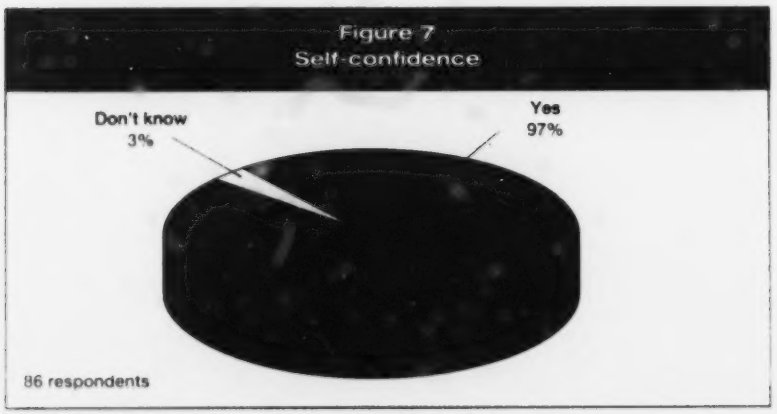
These areas are not mutually exclusive. For example, team work ability necessarily involves communication skills, and confidence is implicated in every other area. In fact, many respondents instantaneously listed off multiple areas without being prompted. The areas are so strongly interconnected that any one area easily became a point of departure for respondents to speak of the other areas. For ease of understanding, this report organizes the areas into discrete categories; however, respondents rarely spoke of these categories in isolation from one another.

These areas are also subject to the influence of multiple factors beyond workplace education.[9] For example, the effects of work reorganization, new technology and so forth would have also been having an impact on the items measured in this research. Respondents were asked to indicate, with all things considered, if their workplaces' basic skills program impacts independently and positively on the 16 areas.

Confidence

It will not come as news to readers that 97% of respondents report that basic skills programs increase the confidence level of program participants (Figure 7). This is the one area that has been consistently reported by studies and program evaluations. Ironically, increased confidence levels is the one impact that is often simultaneously praised (as incredibly positive) and disparaged (as "warm and fuzzy") in the same breath by those trying to promote workplace programs. Based on the interviews with the workplaces, however, it is clear that those working in the promotions field should work hard to elevate the lowly concept of "learner confidence" from the dungeon of "warm-fuzzy" impacts, and put it squarely in the front-room of bottom line impacts.

Figure 7
Self-confidence



"The self-confidence factor is the key to everything ... this is the bottom line ... if I feel I'm intrinsically valuable ... I'll project this onto my work."
Bill Stephaniuk, Employee Relations Manager, MacMillan Bloedel, New Westminster, BC.

[9] See the methodology section for a fuller discussion of these factors.

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"A lot of people had more confidence … there was less procrastination … people would tackle a problem or a task instead of backing away from it. People had a sense of accomplishment … they seemed to talk more, they had a more positive attitude toward things … they became more involved in things generally."
Pat McIntyre, Former Finance and Administrative Officer, BC Parks, Fort St. John, BC

"There is more appreciation of the engineers' job. People can now spot mistakes on specs instead of just going ahead and making it … thinking 'they know more than me.' People have the confidence to say something and this saves the company time and money."
Chuck Stormer, Vice-president of Operations, Decoustics, Etobicoke, ON

"The problems that the crews originally had, started to fade away … it's a confidence thing … people aren't feeling intimidated, they're more likely to cooperate and participate."
Karel Van Hellden, Shift Engineer, on the Bargaining Committee, Molson Brewery, Winnipeg, MB

Confidence is the engine that drives workers to problem-solve, to communicate, to lose their fear of technology. Basic skills programs help participants develop the confidence to actually do what, in many instances, they already know how to do. It is the difference between giving tooth and holding back.

"I don't know what it is but there's something about confidence and self-esteem – people will come forward now and say … here's the problem and this is what I think should be done."
Byron Norman, Former Director of the Alberta Power Employee Association, Steam Plant Operator, Alberta Power, Forestburg, AB

"People develop self-confidence … it snowballs from there. Some people have felt able to bid for a new job … it wasn't the education per se but they were able to put themselves forward."
Sandy Byrnes, Vice-President of UFCW, on Education Committee, Johnson and Johnson Medical, Peterborough, ON

"Self-confidence opens up ideas about what is possible. One employee put herself forward to sit on a health and safety committee, to the surprise of everyone. She didn't feel she'd be able to read the reports. She was very shy. It turned out that she can read, but it was a confidence issue … she had always been good at her job, but now she's contributing to the betterment of the department as a whole."
Member of the Program Coordinating Committee, Surrey Memorial Hospital, BC

"I've seen a greater level of confidence, more cooperation and a lot more personal opinions are being voiced. One of our workers never spoke up at meetings, now when he has something to say, he says it loud and clear. He says it's directly related to the programme … he's learned that he can learn and that gave him confidence."
Sylvain Roy, Union Representative, Bestar, Lac Magantic, PQ

"Before [this guy] was really introverted … we had a meeting and he talked about how his life has changed because of the program … and there we were, the whole gang bawling together."
Alain Laprise, Corresponding Secretary, Federation Travailler de Quebec, Produits Forrestiers Donahue, Lac St. Jean, PQ

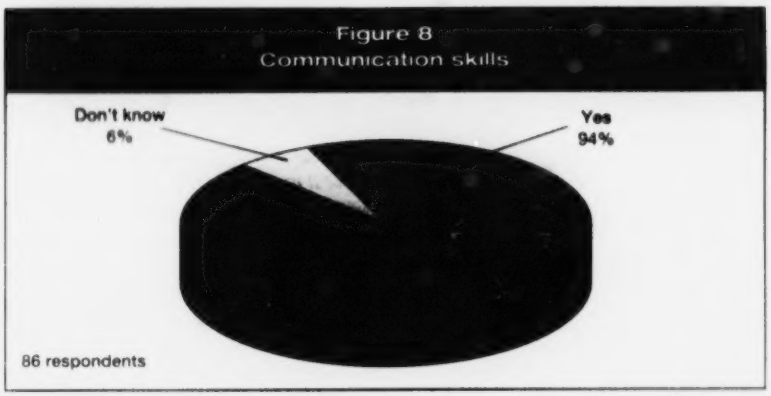
"He walks taller … he used to stoop … now, he makes eye contact … he asks questions."
Andrew Miller, Manager of Employee and Organizational Development, Peterborough, ON

"I've known her for 19 years, and I can tell you I didn't recognize her in the parking lot one day. That woman walks differently!"
Marg Johnson, Vice Chair of HEU, Surrey Memorial Hospital, BC.

The discourse around workplace education is steeped in the assumption that confidence can be disconnected from skills. As a field, we would benefit a great deal by working to dislodge this assumption. Confidence provides the critical underpinning upon which everything else is built. If we can help workplaces to realize this connection, they may stop asking so much for "hard measures" because the connection of confidence to the bottom line would just follow for them in their own minds.

Improved Literacy Skills

Ninety-four percent of respondents report that basic skills programs positively influence participants reading, writing and oral communication skills in ways that benefit the workplace (Figure 8).



"People are no longer afraid to speak ... no longer afraid that others will mock their written skills."
Pat McIntyre, Former Finance and Administrative Officer, BC Parks, Fort St. John, BC.

"There's been marked improvement in written work...I no longer have to re-write people's memos or letters."
Pat McIntyre, Former Finance and Administrative Officer, BC Parks, Fort St. John, BC.

People are much more confident in their ability to interpret written material ... and interpret verbal communication ... there's an overall ability to communicate better."
Danny Cavanagh, Vice-president of Union, CUPE Local 734, Town of Truro, NS.

"There's noticeable improvement in filling out paperwork, production reports, time cards."
Jeff Kinsella, Vice-President, United Steel Workers of America, Reynolds Extrusion, Richmond Hill, ON.

"People read from documents during meetings. People will read manuals they wouldn't before ... some have offered to write them."
Dave Nichols, Training Specialist, Imperial Oil, Medicine Hat, AB.

"Now people take the time to read collective agreements."
Alain Anglehart, President of Local Union Section, Industries Norbord, Abitibi West La Sarre, PQ.

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"We had this guy who'd been there for 20 years. He was promoted from shop floor to supervisor … turns out, he couldn't read memos … he'd hide this by pretending he had to rush off … then he'd take them home to his family. We matched him with a tutor and six months later, he was reading the memos on his own."
Chuck Stormer, Vice-president of Operations, Decoustics, Etobicoke, ON. Speaking of a previous workplace.

"People are speaking for themselves instead of getting others to translate. People are more at ease … naturally they'll do a better job."
Maurice Rozon, Treasurer of United Steel Workers of America, Chair of the Workers' Compensation Board Committee, National Steel Car, Hamilton, ON.

"Yes, they're more autonomous; they fill out their time sheets and order materials on their own."
Lynne Henri, Prevention and Training Counsellor, Noranda Division Matagami, PQ.

"We're able to make up the [beverage] loads ourselves … there's a lot of math involved with that."
Jeff Axworthy, Program Participant, Seaman's Beverages, Charlottetown, PEI.

Improved reading and writing skills have numerous positive spinoffs in people's lives beyond the workplace:

"There was this older guy … he didn't know his alphabet … the first thing he wrote was a Valentine's poem to his son. He cried writing it … his son cried receiving it. Another guy told us that he had to go to the hospital and for the first time he was able to read the signs."
Dolores Whiffen, Program Coordinator, Fishery Products International, Bona Vista, NFLD.

"A guy signed his paycheck for the first time … he had been using an X."
Gerri Martin, Union President, National Union of Public and General Employees (Brush Workers), T.S. Simms, Saint John, NB.

"It's had a great impact in their personal lives. They can read with their children now."
Patricia Séguin, Emballages Consumers, Montreal, PQ.

"Now they're reading stories to their grandchildren."
Doug Fisher, Union Educator, Quaker Oats Company of Canada, Peterborough, ON.

The influence of these spinoffs loop back to benefit the workplace:

"If they can do things like help their kids with homework, life will improve which in turn makes people happier at work."
Russ Harrison, Shop Steward, Boeing, Winnipeg, MB.

Workers Advance To Other Training

The increase in confidence and skills quickly impacts on a number of other things. Though unsolicited, a recurring theme in the interviews was that program participants become highly motivated to take on other training courses.

"It creates a want for knowledge."
Martin Cheremkora, Chair, SET Committee, International Woodworkers of America Local 1-3567, MacMillan Bloedel, New Westminster, BC. Quoting a program participant.

"It inspires people to pursue their studies and seek further qualifications in the workplace."
Daniel Rodrigue, Personnel Supervisor, Produits Forrestiers Donahue, St. Felicien, PQ.

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"People definitely pursued other training programs more ardently."
Coordonnatrice Formation Organizational, CAMCO, Montreal, PQ.

"There's been a 90% increase in people taking other courses. It used to be that only 5% of course spots were filled by factory people, now it's over 70%."
Cynthia Sellev, Training & Development Manager, Department of Transportation and Corporate Office, Boeing, Winnipeg, MB.

"A lot of people used to call in sick on training days [for] health and safety training, equipment operation, fork-lift certification ...now people jump at these opportunities. Personal insecurity was holding people back. Also, these courses required answering multiple choice questions."
Allie Craswell, Plant Manager, Avon Foods Inc., Berwick, NS.

"It affects the general atmosphere ... people are trying to better themselves. ... attitudes have changed. Some people have become interested in getting industrial mechanic certification."
Russell Bent, Maintenance Mechanic, Chief Union Steward, Avon Foods Inc., Berwick, NS.

"People are taking control of their own learning...now they're suggesting other courses."
Twyla Hurley, Program Coordinator, Crestbrook Forest Industries, Cranbrook, BC.

People were so excited and enthusiastic ... they got out of a rut ... they wanted to do more and more courses."
Shelbi December Wildman, Community Relations Department, Canfor Forest Products, Fort St. John, BC.

"A lot go onto other programs and courses."
Lloyd Campbell, Senior Advisor, Organizational Development Group, Human Resources Department, Syncrude Canada Ltd., Fort McMurray, AB.

Development Of Learning Culture

Another unsolicited finding was the degree to which co-workers of program participants were affected by the presence of the workplace classes. The presence of the basic skills programs clearly contributes to the development of a learning culture in the overall workplace.

"It influences people around them to play up to their potential ... it rubs off ... others feel inspired to take courses too ... courses of other types."
Karel Van Hellden, Shift Engineer, on the Bargaining Committee, Molson Brewery, Winnipeg, MB.

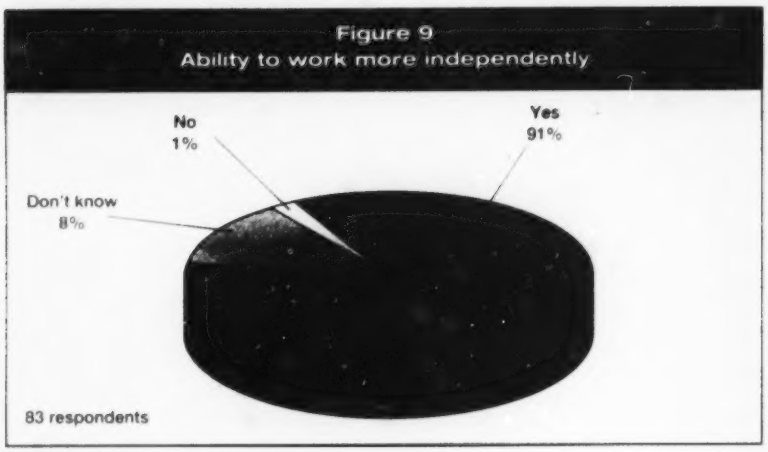
"It's good for the individuals taking the courses ... but also for other co-workers ... it's motivational for others who don't need [to take basic skills courses] to get their university degree or whatever ... there's a learning climate."
Peter Darling, Manager, Human Relations, Johnson and Johnson Medical, Peterborough, ON.

"A housekeeper has decided to train as a medical sonographer...this person can become a role model ... others feel there are opportunities ... people may or may not follow in her foot steps, but the sense of potential has a strong positive effect."
Member of the Program Coordinating Committee, Surrey Memorial Hospital, BC.

Problem Solving Skills

Problem solving involves thinking analytically, suggesting solutions and taking action. Like many of the items measured here, problem-solving ability is as much attitudinally-based as it is skill-based; it is strongly influenced by surrounding conditions and opportunities. However, it is clear that 87% of workplace representatives believe that basic skills programs exact an inde-

pendent, and positive influence on participants' ability to problem-solve. It follows that a sizable majority of respondents (90%) would indicate that employees who take basic skills programs have an increased ability to work independently.



"People don't give up right away. They try to fix the problem."
Allie Craswell, Plant Manager, Avon Foods Inc., Berwick, NS.

"Individuals are taking more initiative instead of automatically getting the union to do things for them."
Russ Harrison, Shop Steward, Boeing, Winnipeg, MB.

"There's more responsibility taken ... in our discussion workshops, people who took the courses sit around the table ... you can see the difference between those who took the courses and those who didn't ... just from their attitudes. Those who took the courses participate more, make notes ..."
Michel Charotte, Training Counsellor, Noranda, Montreal, PQ.

"People are thinking about what they're doing. They ask more questions than before about the equipment."
Gerri Martin, President, National Union of Public and General Employees (Brush Workers), T.S. Simms, Saint John, NB.

"There was one line that we had a lot of problems with ... people would sit back and wait for management to fix everything ... now they problem-solve ... bring solutions forward ... people can now be used on teams, project groups. People have a lot of skills and experience ... this has given people a chance to fully use them."
Doug Fisher, Union Educator, The Quaker Oats Company of Canada Ltd., Peterborough, ON.

"Prior to the class ... they never would have imagined trying to solve a math problem ... they would have gone to someone else."
Wendell Weeb, Manager, Staff Development, Bristol Aerospace, Winnipeg, MB.

Increased Ability To Use Technology

Even though the basic skills programs do not in themselves teach computer skills, the programs positively influence people's ability to use technology. Eighty-seven percent of respondents (Figure 10) report that programs impact positively on participants' ability to use workplace-based technology.

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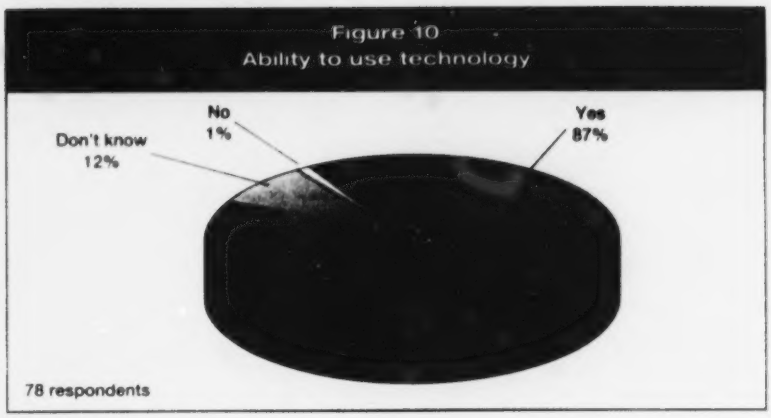


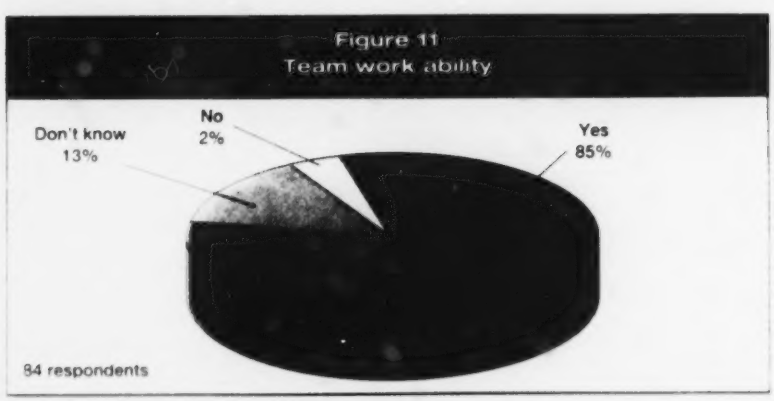
"People can now read the computerized trouble screen."
Martin Cheremkora, Chair, SET Committee, International Woodworkers of America, Local 1-3567, MacMillan Bloedel, New Westminster, BC.

"They can read written instructions more confidently."
Gino Trudel, General Manager, Industries Norbord, La Sarre Abitibi West, PQ.

"A member has made changes from housekeeping to the front desk, and now she's in the business office ... another is in medical records."
Jacqueline Alderking, Laundry Department Supervisor, and Secretary, Hospital Employees Union, Fort St. John General Hospital, BC.

Enhanced Ability To Work In A Team

Working effectively within a team-based model requires a set of sophisticated skills including note-taking, chairing, and communicating ideas. The presence or absence of these skills is quite conspicuous, which may account for why many respondents became noticeably excited when asked about the influence of basic skills programs on team work ability. Clearly, some respondents had witnessed dramatic transformations in some individuals. Overall, eighty-five percent of respondents report that basic skills programs enhance participants' ability to work within a team-based model (Figure 11).



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"[Regarding team work, we see] more soft kinds of connections ... people helping each other ... exchanging information ... this breaks down barriers among groups, production-line divisions. This is very important. We can't get accountants to relate that to a bottom line ... but I know it makes a difference."
Martin Cheremkora, Chair, SET Committee, International Woodworkers of America Local 1-3567, MacMillan Bloedel, New Westminster, BC

"There's more of a team work approach simply because people aren't hiding."
Allie Craswell, Plant Manager, Avon Foods Inc., Berwick, NS

"People are more flexible ... team-oriented ... people aren't waiting to be supervised ... people and groups are self-managed."
Bill Richardson, Co-Chair of Training Committee, BICC PYROTENAX, Trenton, ON

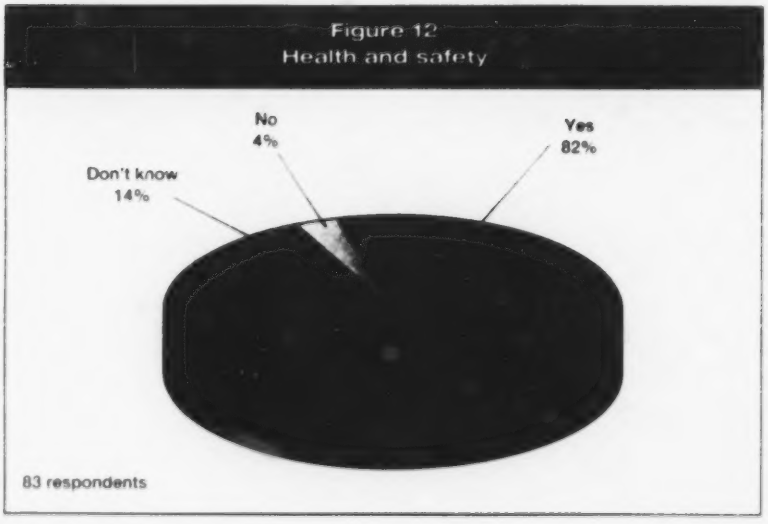
"[Program participants] are now asked to chair or facilitate teams ... to take minutes ... to leave written notes for other teams."
Lloyd Campbell, Senior Advisor, Organizational Development Group, Human Resources Department, Syncrude Canada Ltd., Fort McMurray, AB

"They talk to each other more."
Company Representative, Weston's Bakery, Longeuil, PQ

Improved Health & Safety

Health and safety issues are becoming more complex with ISO 9000 and other regulatory requirements. Eighty-two percent of respondents report increased health and safety, either because employees are more equipped to read signs and labels, or because they are better able to absorb standard WHMIS training, including the right to refuse unsafe work (Figure 12).

Figure 12
Health and safety



"People easily report dangers ... before they wouldn't ... they'd fear being fired."
Don Allan, President, United Steel Workers of America, Local 3239, Ancast, Winnipeg, MB

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"People have marked improvement in absorbing health and safety training."
Byron Norman, Former Director of the Alberta Power Employee Association, Steam Plant Operator, Alberta Power, Forestburg, AB.

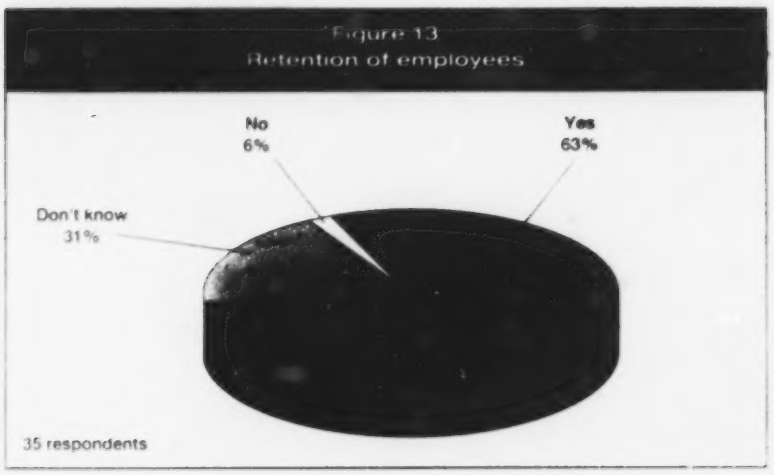
"They refer to [health and safety] documents on their own now."
Sylvain Roy, Union Representative, Bestar, Lac Magantic, PQ.

"We've seen a great improvement in safety standards, especially those who work in 'closed off' areas."
Gino Trudel, General Manager, Industries Norbord, La Sarre Abitibi West, PQ.

Increased Promotability

Wanting to promote (or be promoted) within is high among the motivations for wanting basic skills education programs. Increased promotability as a result of programs is reported by close to 90% of respondents (Figure 14). Sixty-three percent of respondents indicated that basic skills programs help workplaces to retain employees over time (Figure 13). This percentage should be interpreted with caution; due to the prevelance of downsizing, many respondents tempered their answers to the question regarding retention.

Figure 13
Retention of employees



"We've had people complete their GED and qualify for apprenticeship programs."
Roger Clinch, Director of Corporate Communications, Brunswick Mining and Smelting, Bathurst, NB.

"It gave me the courage to apply for a job in the summer ... there was some paperwork ... I wouldn't have applied before."
Betty Gillis, Food Processing Worker and Program Participant, Cavendish Farms, New Annan, PEI.

"These two fellows came to work for the town 10 to 15 years ago in the (sidewalk, street and sewer department). Now they have their GED and certificates for water treatment operator ... now they are operators in the water treatment plant which is totally automated. You don't get better than them for workers ... they know how the whole system works ... everything's connected."
Michael McGill, Town Engineer, Town of Truro, NS.

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"We've since promoted individuals to supervisory positions."
Brad McCormack, Plant Manager, Ancast, Winnipeg, MB

"People have become crew or group leaders."
Susan Lavich, Human Resources Advisor, Molson Brewery, Winnipeg, MB

"We've seen a lot of benefits since embarking on this program, for example, some [recent immigrants] employees have been promoted out of entry level jobs. Some people have been promoted to the quality control department."
Don Allan, President, United Steel Workers of America, Local 3239, Ancast, Winnipeg, MB.

"By far, the 'mature' apprentices who had to upgrade prior to the apprenticeship turned out to be the best ones. They had a head start in the workplace."
Warren Hope, Human Resources Manager, General Electric, Peterborough, ON.

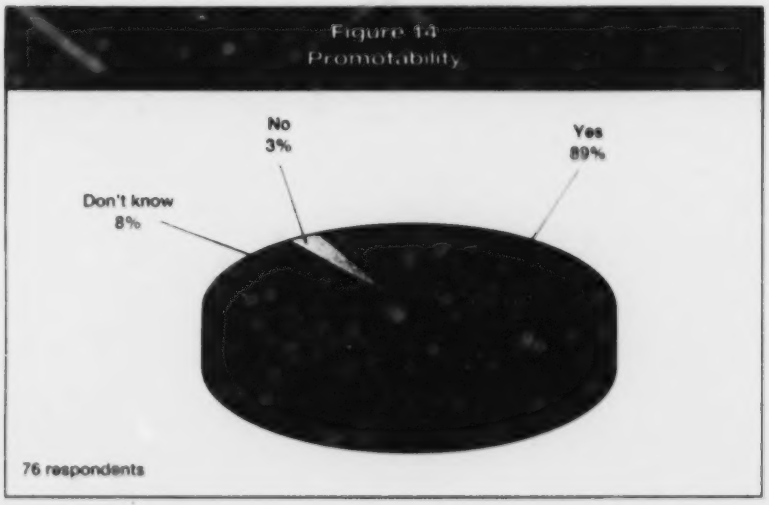
"A woman who was working in the laundry department is now a full-time teacher in the language program."
Judy Rogers, Deputy City Manager, City of Vancouver, BC.

"I've seen many examples of people who might have been laid off who were able to stay and move up. In my books, it's a win-win situation...recently, a woman who would have been laid off was kept ... it's better than hiring off the street because she maintains the knowledge of her previous department which is interconnected with the new department ... she has insight ... she understands the obstacles, and she is cross-trained."
John Webster, President of Graphic Communication International Union, Local 34M, Calgary Herald, Calgary, AB.

Even if people do not get promotions immediately, the result is still positive:

"People are a lot more open about coming forward if they don't get a posting. They come and ask what they can do about it, instead of just feeling defeated."
Fay Vokey, Human Resources Supervisor, Cavendish Farms, New Annan, PEI.

Figure 14
Promotability



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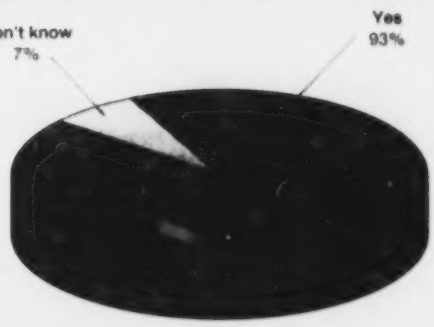
Improved Employee Morale

Given the above, it is not surprising that a large majority (93%) of respondents report basic skills programs help to increase employee morale (Figure 15). Plain and simple, participants feel better about their workplaces and about the unions that represent them.

Figure 15
Employee morale



86 respondents

"Employees perceive that the company supports them … we definitely have a happier workforce with higher morale … cynicism is lowered … people are less disgruntled generally."
Ron Wagner, Plant Chair, Canfor Forest Products, Fort St John, BC.

"The fact that the union took part in the discussions gave us a people image and the workers realized that we care about them."
Gaston Lemieux, Union President, Emballages Consumers, Montreal, PQ.

"Morale is improving. People went from being secretive [about being in the program] to being open and proud of it."
Jamie McIntyre, Manager of Corporate Education, CAMECO - Rabbit Lake Mine, Rabbit Lake, SK.

"Morale was raised … it shows in their work and attitude. People feel better about themselves so they perform better in their work and we get a better product. People are better able to handle cross-training."
Brenda Whitman, Treasurer, Joint Workplace Training Committee, BICC PYROTENAX, Trenton, ON.

Decreased Barriers Among Workers

Many respondents stated that basic skills programs help remove barriers in the workplace based on age, sex, race, and language.

"We've seen positive changes with the work teams, it permitted the older workers to get promotions."
Gino Trudel, General Manager, Industries Norbord, La Sarre Abitibi West, PQ.

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"Many [participants] are women who didn't get access [to language training] before."
Jacqueline Alderking, Laundry Department Supervisor, and Secretary, Hospital Employees Union, Fort St. John General Hospital, BC.

"We've seen a shifting of cultural barriers among employees ... a shifting among different sub-groups within the workforce."
Bill Stephaniuk, Employee Relations Manager, MacMillan Bloedel, New Westminster, BC.

"The course breaks down cultural barriers."
Daniel Careau, Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator, Nanisivic Mines, Nanisivic, NWT.

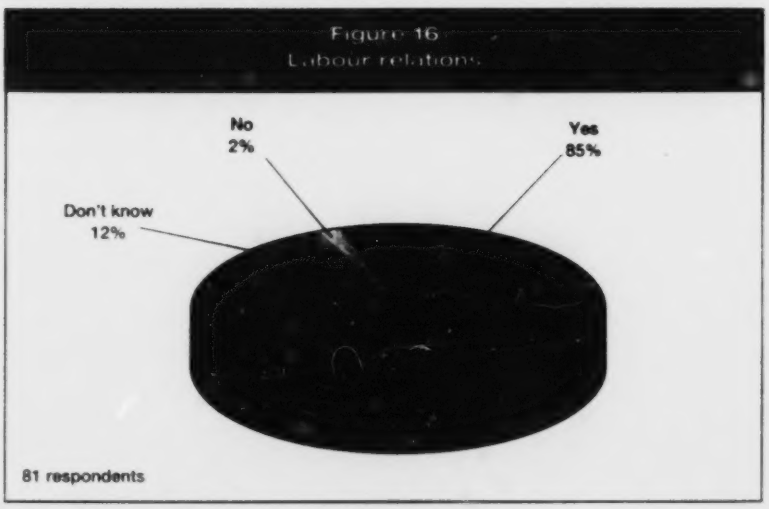
"There is increased communication among different groups within the plant...people get to know each other ... this transfers to the shop floor."
Twyla Hurley, Program Coordinator, Crestbrook Forest Industries, Cranbrook, BC.

"The workers are less isolated ... people feel better about themselves ... there are better relations among employees ... it reduces racism in the workplace and at a broader societal level."
Andy Paterson, President, Canadian Autoworkers, Local 504, Westinghouse, Hamilton, ON.

Improved Labour Relations

Are labour relations improved by the presence of basic skills programs in a workplace? Eighty-five percent of both company and employee representatives agree that their workplaces' program helps to improve labour relations. Improved labour relations is particularly pronounced in large urban centres. Ninety-two percent of respondents from the workplace in communities of more than 10,000 report increases. Less pronounced, but still high, 62% of respondents in smaller centres report increases. Many respondents spoke of the initial mistrust that quickly broke through to genuine appreciation and good-will.

Figure 16
Labour relations



The numbers in this figure do not add to 100 due to rounding.

"If you're in a hostile labour relations environment [having a program] can smooth the waters a lot ... it allows for cooperation in a positive program."
Roger Clinch, Director of Corporate Communications, Brunswick Mining and Smelting, Bathurst, NB.

"Trust has increased ... dealings between the parties are smoother...years ago, things were very adversarial."
Don Heintz, Labour Relations Advisor, Department of Public Works and Traffic, City of Hamilton, ON.

"Our program was well publicized as a joint labour-management effort ... this has been good for labour relations."
Audrey Orosiamma, Manager, Human Relations, Nestle Canada Inc., Toronto, ON.

"There's more trust of management ... the workers see me differently."
Allie Craswell, Plant Manager, Avon Foods Inc., Berwick, NS.

"Union and management worked together ... it was the one time there were no hassles...it cut across everything."
Dolores Whiffen, Program Coordinator, Fishery Products International, Bona Vista, NFLD.

"It's reduced the number of grievances ... these things cost."
Twyla Hurley, Program Coordinator, Crestbrook Forest Industries, Cranbrook, BC.

"I've definitely seen this in my workplace. Internal relations improve because the company and the union did something together. I'd highly recommend to both union and company ... both will gain. You'll see rapid impact on labour relations ... the temperature will go down."
Ron Wagner, Plant Chair, Cantor Forest Products, Fort St John, BC.

"There's less mistrust."
Karel Van Hellden, Shift Engineer, Member of the Bargaining Committee, Molson Brewery, Winnipeg, MB.

"They get into less arguments with management...for example, they must give a five day notice for a personal leave day...now they read the collective agreement and give the right number of days...before some would only give a one day notice."
Bob Panzen, President, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3261, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON.

"[Labour relations] were always good, but it brought us closer together because we had to work as a team to set up the program."
Francois Gelinas, Coordinator of Training and Industrial Relations, Kruger Trois Rivieres, Trois Rivieres, PQ.

"The joint training review committee has been working on basic education. This has laid a foundation of working together on a positive initiative...this has lead to better relations on the second phase, which is technical training."
Wendell Weeb, Manager, Staff Development, Bristol Aerospace, Winnipeg, MB.

But what about the bottom line? *"It's nice that people have more confidence, and are better communicators and problem-solvers. We appreciate that they are more comfortable with technological change, team work, and work independence. We understand that workplaces have increased health and safety records, better morale ... and ... well, but what about the bottom line? I mean, what about, you know, the hard impacts like, well, like productivity for example?"*

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Productivity

Figures 17 through 20 show a composite of four bottom line measures. Close to 80% of the respondents report that their workplaces have seen increased productivity as a result of the basic skills programs. Sixty-six percent have seen reduced error rates in people's work. Overall, 85% of respondents have seen increases in the quality of people's work and 73%, an increase in work effort.

Figure 17
Productivity

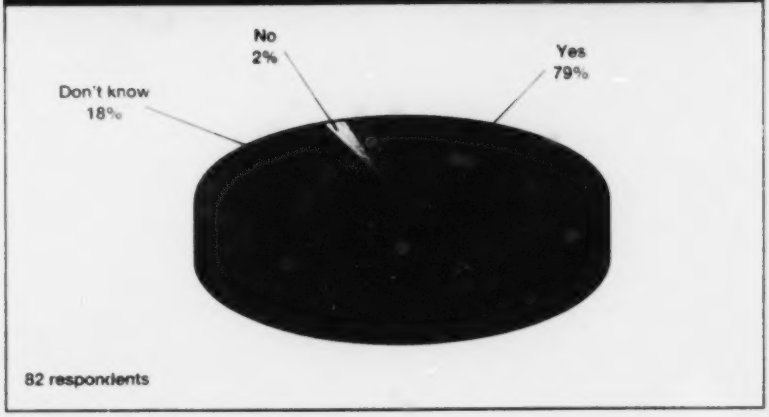

Figure 18
Reduced error rates

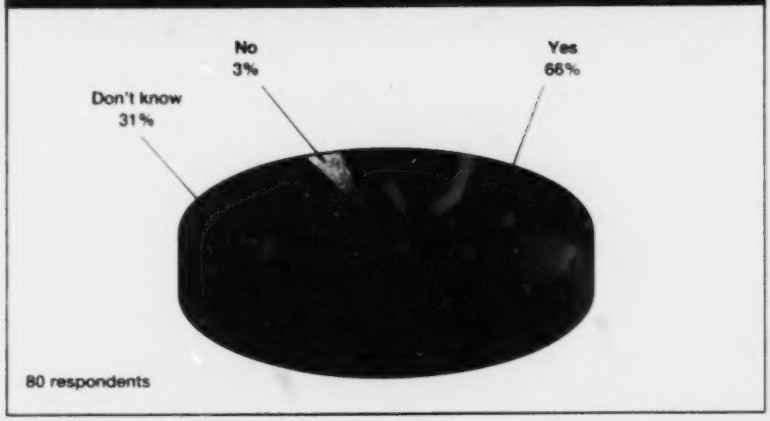

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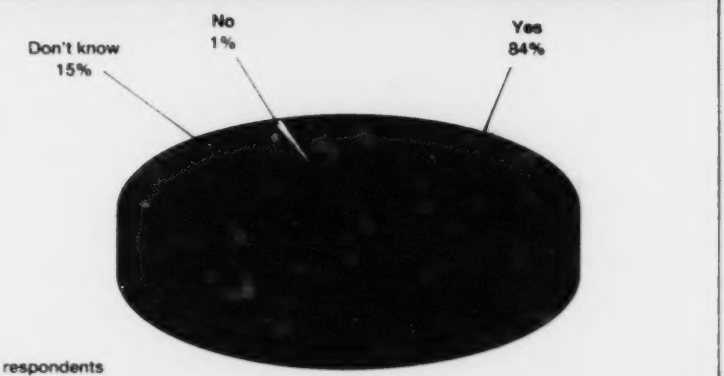
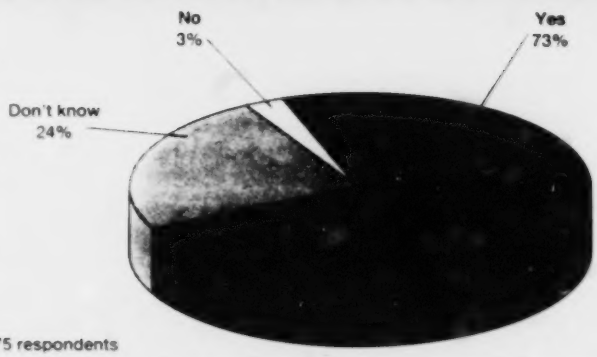
Figure 19
Quality of work



81 respondents

Figure 20
Work effort



75 respondents

"There's more efficiency on the production line ... 50% of this is accounted for by automation, and 50% by education ... they go hand in hand."
Doug Ellis, Purchasing Manager and Program Tutor, Seaman's Beverages, Charlottetown, PEI.

"You don't have to stretch your imagination much to figure it out. Instead of fighting change, things are happening faster ... this saves money ... we can't say how much but clearly we have."
Dave Nichols, Training Specialist, Imperial Oil, Medicine Hat, AB.

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"It can't help but directly impact on the bottom-line."
Audrey Orosiamma, Manager, Human Relations, Nestle Canada Inc., Toronto, ON.

"It impacts on the bottom-line because people understand how you arrive at efficiencies or how efficiencies can be enhanced. Also, you can get the full benefit of the equipment if people can operate it efficiently."
Karel Van Hellden, Shift Engineer, Member of the Bargaining Committee, Molson Brewery, Winnipeg, MB.

"The performance has changed a lot. There's more self-confidence in moving along with changes."
Russell Bent, Maintenance Mechanic, Chief Union Steward, Avon Foods Inc., Berwick, NS.

"When they see that the company spends time, they appreciate it and they become more interested in their work and try to do a better job."
Brad McCormack, Plant Manager, Ancast, Winnipeg, MB.

"If someone complained about water ... they'd say, 'I don't know' ... now they give an intelligent response."
Michael McGill, Town Engineer, Town of Truro, NS.

"People feel better about themselves so they perform better in their work and we get a better product."
Brenda Whitman, Treasurer, Joint Workplace Training Committee, BICC/PYROTENAX, Trenton, ON.

Bottom-line impacts are clearly influenced by the length of time basic skills programs have been running: the longer a program has been running, the greater the impact. Figure 21 shows increased productivity in relation to whether the basic skills programs had been running for less than three years (-3) or more than three years (+3). A significantly higher percentage (87%) of respondents from +3 workplaces report higher productivity, than did respondents from -3 workplaces (64%). Respondents from -3 workplaces were more likely to say that they did not as yet know about the impact. These patterns hold for error rates (Figure 22) and work effort (Figure 23).

Figure 21
What percentage of respondents ... increased productivity, based on length of program?

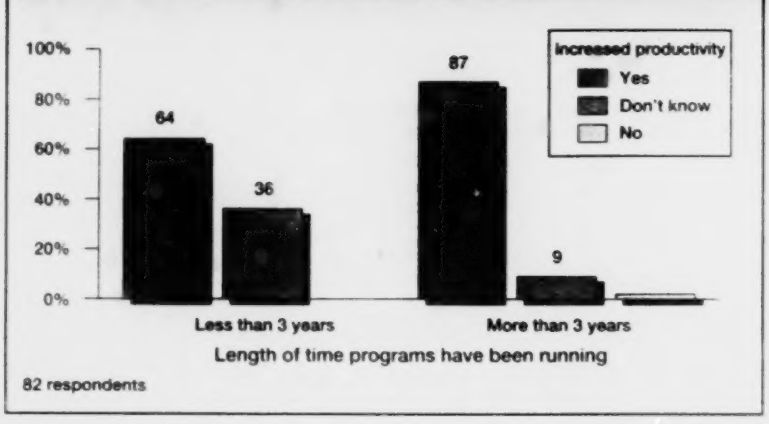

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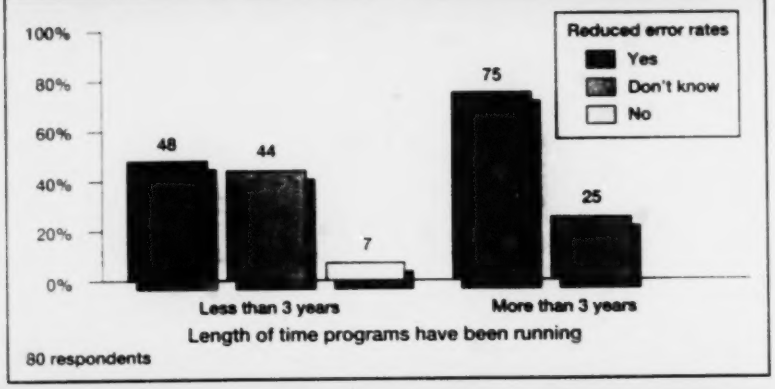
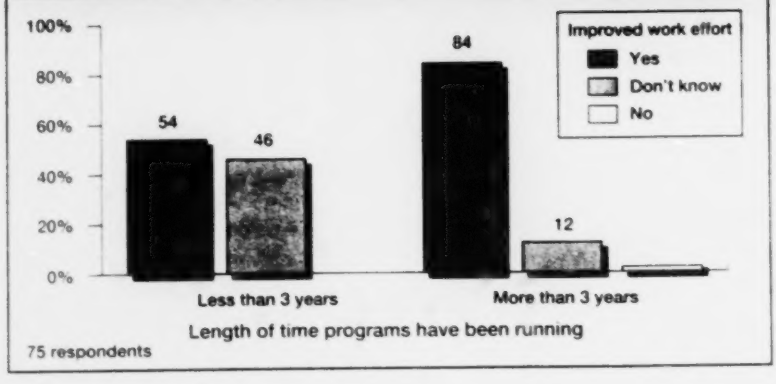
Figure 22
What percentage of respondents report reduced error rates, based on length of program?



80 respondents

Figure 23
What percentage of respondents report work effort, based on length of program?



75 respondents

IV - Discussion

Workplace basic skills programs work. The programs work because employees gain confidence, acquire new skills, and believe that they are valued by their workplaces.

The dynamics around the hiding of literacy needs are far more complex than this research could begin to capture. Respondent, Allie Craswell, Plant Manager for Avon Foods in Nova Scotia, offered this perspective: "Upper management may ask, 'Who the hell did you hire in the first place?' Often the person who hired is held responsible for the deficiencies ... so the hiding happens on a number of levels." Another respondent spoke about how some potential participants do not come forward because they fear being fired for saying (on their initial application form) that they had a high school diploma when, in fact, they did not.

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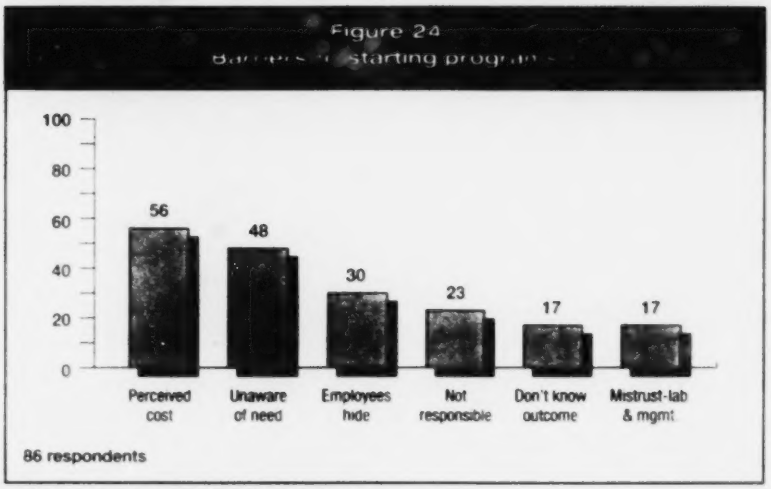

Most respondents gave multiple reasons.

This study documents the motivations of workplaces for starting basic skills programs and the impacts of the programs in the workplace. The motivations are clear and the impacts are clear. Certainly, once presented with these facts, Canadian workplaces will be lining up to start programs. If it were that easy, this study would not have even been needed. Numerous barriers exist to workplaces starting programs.

In order to broaden our understanding, respondents were asked to elaborate on what the earlier barriers were within their own workplaces, and to speculate about why more workplaces do not have programs. Figure 24 collapses the (narrative) responses to the two questions to arrive at a composite picture of barriers to workplaces starting programs. The actual percentages in Figure 24 are less important than the overall themes and patterns they reflect. All of these categories, and the assumptions underneath them, should be anticipated by the field in its outreach efforts.

In order of frequency of mention, the barriers to starting workplace basic skills programs include: perceived cost (56%);

> ***"Employers try to cut costs by going straight to specialized training."***
> Gino Trudel, General Manager, Industries Norbord, La Sarre Abitibi West, PQ

... lack of awareness of the need for a program (48%);

> ***"People who are already highly educated make assumptions. ... they just don't notice."***
> Bill Stephaniuk, Employee Relations Manager, MacMillan Bloedel, New Westminister, BC.

... literacy needs being hidden by employees (30%);

> ***"Employees were hiding the problem ... there were fears about job security ... [they wondered] 'will it be held against me?"***
> Doug Ellis, Purchasing Manager and Program Tutor, Seaman's Beverages, Charlottetown, PEI.

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"Employees fear being ridiculed ... there's a lot of shame and fear about going back into 'the system'."
Brenda Whitman, Treasurer, Joint Workplace Training Committee, BICC PYROTENAX, Trenton, ON.

... not feeling responsible (23%);

"Companies are in the trap of assuming it's not our job."
Member of the Program Coordinating Committee, Surrey Memorial Hospital, BC.

... not understanding the outcome of programs (17%);

"They don't know what they're committing to."
Don Sharp, Union Chair for International Woodworkers of America, Crestbrook Forest Industries, Cranbrook, BC.

"People are reluctant to go out on a limb and talk it up and then look bad later if it doesn't 'produce'."
Allie Craswell, Plant Manager, Avon Foods Inc., Berwick, NS.

... and, mistrust between labour and management (17%). The only significant difference in the barriers identified by employer and employee representatives was that the latter were four times more likely to cite mistrust between labour and management as a central barrier (32% versus 8%).

"There's a high level of cynicism ... where's the eight ball? A lot of these problems are inherent in production-line work and the history of 1930s management style which used to scapegoat through firing."
Ron Wagner, Plant Chair, Cantor Forest Products, Fort St John, BC.

"People were apprehensive. We had to convince them that it was for them, not just for the company and that there would be no repercussions."
Daniel Rodrigue, Personnel Supervisor, Produits Forestiers Donahue, St. Felicien, PQ.

"Maybe some employers don't want more educated employees because they may ask questions."
Richard Heilmann, Program Participant, Lakefield Research Ltd., Lakefield, ON.

Respondents were asked if they thought workplace basic skills programs were a good training investment, and about what advice they would give to workplaces similar to their own that do not as yet have programs. All respondents agreed that the programs are a good training investment.

"We were the first in our community to start such a program. Everybody was looking at us ... but it was well worth it ... we're very satisfied."
Company Representative, Weston's Bakery, Longueil, PQ.

"It's a good basis of all other training ... if they don't have those basics, then other training programs won't be as successful."
Lynne Henri, Prevention and Training Counsellor, Noranda Division Matagami, PQ.

"I think the price of education may be high but the price of ignorance is even greater."
Alain Gilbert, President Du Syndicat des metallos Locale 6131, Mines Noranda Affinerie CCR, Matagami, PQ.

"It's the foundation that people need to do other technical training...today's requirements are more sophisticated."
Wendell Weeb, Manager, Staff Development, Bristol Aerospace, Winnipeg, MB.

"I wouldn't have risked recommending it to my company if I didn't [think it was a good investment]."
Chuck Stormer, Vice-president of Operations, Decoustics, Etobicoke, ON.

"For the two hours we give per week ... we get back 10 hours in the future."
Michael McGill, Town Engineer, Town of Truro, NS.

"The increased safety factor alone makes it worth it."
Don Heintz, Labour Relations Advisor, Department of Public Works and Traffic, City of Hamilton, ON.

"Everything equates to dollars and cents. There are lots of hidden costs to illiteracy ... ripple effect ... more administration ... more supervision."
Ed Thomas, Chair of Education Committee, City of Hamilton, ON.

"Employees have acquired knowledge of the business and skills they've learned over time ... it's a better investment to keep the existing workforce than to start from scratch."
Yvonne Lapierre, Human Resources Manager, Consumer Glass, Scoudouc, NB.

"It can't help but directly impact on the bottom-line."
Audrey Orosiamma, Manager, Human Relations, Nestle Canada Inc., Toronto, ON.

"If it wasn't a good investment, we wouldn't be spending the money."
Twyla Hurley, Program Coordinator, Crestbrook Forest Industries, Cranbrook, BC.

"You'll have increased ability to have a higher value added product."
Twyla Hurley, Program Coordinator, Crestbrook Forest Industries, Cranbrook, BC.

"You're setting the stage for future learning ... we need continuous learning to make the organization run properly ... there is a serious ripple effect ... the impact is huge for a relatively small investment."
Member of the Program Coordinating Committee, Surrey Memorial Hospital, BC.

"It pays! For individuals and companies."
Bill Stephaniuk, Employee Relations Manager, MacMillan Bloedel, New Westminster, BC.

"It's win-win. It's an easy forum to build respect and positive outcomes between company and employees."
Ron Wagner, Plant Chair, Canfor Forest Products, Fort St John, BC.

"It allows us to take advantage of the abilities of our employees. People have a huge level of skill and experience ... you can get access to this by giving the basic course."
Judy Rogers, Deputy City Manager, City of Vancouver, BC.

"It's necessary. The classic educational system was by rote ... not problem-solving type thinking."
Frank Bajc, Plant Manager, Alberta Power, Forestburg, AB.

"It's nothing but good ... you'd be a fool not to invest."
John Webster, President of Graphic Communication International Union, Local 34M, Calgary Herald, Calgary, AB.

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"It's one of the best investments any company can make ... we keep talking about the global economy ... unless we address the basic skills piece, we won't succeed. It has to be given a very high priority."
Lloyd Campbell, Senior Advisor, Organizational Development Group, Human Resources Department, Syncrude Canada Ltd., Fort McMurray, AB.

"People will be more effective. There'll be fewer accidents, more ability to follow written directions, fewer misunderstandings ... all of these things add up."
Jeff Kinsella, Vice-President, United Steel Workers of America, Reynolds Extrusion, Richmond Hill, ON.

"It makes good business sense."
Darrell Bast, Supervisor, Employee Relations, CAMECO-Rabbit Lake Mine, Rabbit Lake, SK.

"It costs a lot of money not to have these programs ... You're either going to have resources depleted by performance deficiency or you can redeploy the resources into basic skills programs. Compared to other training this is so cheap."
Manager of Training and Development for a provincial gas company.

"The workforce will be better prepared for things that are coming down ... the modern workplace needs people in a learning mode ... you can't just hire people off the street to do these jobs ... we have to train."
Doug Fisher, Union Educator, The Quaker Oats Company of Canada Ltd., Peterborough, ON.

"If you bring in a piece of modern equipment ... you can save money if people can run it properly."
Doug Fisher, Union Educator, The Quaker Oats Company of Canada Ltd., Peterborough, ON.

"Your employees are resources, you can't run machines with bad parts ... you would change them or fix them ... people need new knowledge."
Sandy Byrnes, Vice-President of the Union, on Education Committee, Johnson and Johnson Medical, Peterborough, ON.

"Yes, ultimately there are definite benefits for both union and company. It's easier to train people in other aspects of a job ... it's easier to get ideas and instructions across. You need people to convey ideas to you as well ... especially important in the new management style ... which requires participation, team work, etc."
John Walker, Safety, Security and Training Manager, Reynolds Extrusion, Richmond Hill, ON.

"It's a relatively low cost ... what we get out of it is well worth it ... relative to the cost of other training programs ... the cost is very low."
Peter Darling, Manager, Human Relations, Johnson and Johnson Medical, Peterborough, ON.

Based on this study of 53 Canadian workplaces, it can be stated with confidence that workplace basic skills programs are a sound training investment for Canadian companies.

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Appendix A

List of Participating Workplaces and Unions

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

NANISIVIC MINES
Daniel Careau, Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator

BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC FOREST SERVICE
Pat McIntyre, Former Finance and Administrative Officer

CANFOR FOREST PRODUCTS
Shelbi December Wildman, Community Relations Department
Ron Wagner, Plant Chair

CITY OF VANCOUVER
Judy Rogers, Deputy City Manager
Karen Kindred, Administrative Coordinator, CUPE, Local 1004

CRESTBROOK FOREST INDUSTRIES
Twyla Hurley, Program Coordinator
Don Sharp, Plant Union Chair

FORT ST. JOHN GENERAL HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CENTRE
Rosemary Landry, Inservice Education Coodinator
Jacqueline Alderking, Laundry Department Supervisor,
Secretary, Hospital Employees Union.

MACMILLAN BLOEDEL LIMITED
Bill Stephaniuk, Employee Relations Manager
Martin Cheremkora, Chair, SET Committee,
International Woodworkers of America, Local 1-3567

SURREY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
Member of Program Coordinating Committee
Marg Jackson, Vice-chair, HEU

ALBERTA

ALBERTA POWER
Frank Bajc, Plant Manager
Byron Norman, Director, Alberta Power Employee Association

IMPERIAL OIL RESOURCES LTD.
Dave Nichols, Training Specialist

SYNCRUDE CANADA LTD.
Lloyd Campbell, Human Resource Senior Advisor

THE CALGARY HERALD
Michael Dyer, Vice President of Human Resources
John Webster, President, Graphic Communication International Union, Local 34M

SASKATCHEWAN

CAMECO - RABBIT LAKE MINE
Darrell Bast, Supervisor, Employee Relations
Jamie McIntyre, Manager of Corporate Education

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REGINA PUBLIC LIBRARY
Margaret Dodson, Learner Centre Assistant

SASKENERGY
Susan Jarvis, Manager of Training and Development

MANITOBA

ANCAST INDUSTRIES LTD.
Brad McCormack, Plant Manager
Don Allen, President, USWA, Local 3239

BOEING CANADA TECHNOLOGY LTD.
Cynthia Sellev, Training and Development Manager
Russ Harrison, Shop Steward, CAW, Local 2169

BRISTOL AEROSPACE LTD.
Wendell Weeb, Manager Staff Development

MOLSON BREWERIES
Susan Lavich, Human Resources Advisor
Karel Van Hellden, Shift Engineer

ONTARIO

BICC/ PYROTENAX
Brenda Whitman, Treasurer, Joint Workplace Training Committee
Bill Richardson, Co - Chair Training Committee

CITY OF HAMILTON - DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND TRAFFIC
Ed Thomas, Chair of Education Committee
Don Heintz, Labour Relations Advisor

DECOUSTICS
Chuck Stormer, Vice President of Operations

GENERAL ELECTRIC CANADA INC.
Warren Hope, Human Resources Manager

JOHNSON & JOHNSON INC.
Peter Darling, Manager of Human Resources
Sandy Byrnes, Vice President of UFCW

KNAPE VOGT
Tony Taylor, President

LAKEFIELD RESEARCH LTD.
Shelley Kocjan, Human Resources Coordinator
Richard Heilmann, Program Participant

NATIONAL STEEL CAR
Maurice Rozon, Treasurer of USWA, Local 7135

NESTLE CANADA INC.
Audrey Orostamma, Manager of Human Resources

THE QUAKER OATS COMPANY OF CANADA LTD.
Doug Fisher, Leader - Training and Education

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REYNOLD'S EXTRUSION
John Walker, Safety, Security and Training Manager
Jeff Kinsella, Vice President, USWA

ROVON STEEL LTD.
Gilles Rouleau, Owner - Manager

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
Dimas Medeiros, Area Manager, Facilities, Services & Caretaking Division
Bob Panzen, President, CUPE, Local 3261

WESTINGHOUSE CANADA INC.
Lindsay Scott, Senior Training Consultant
Andy Paterson, President of CAW, Local 504

STRANO SYSCO FOODSERVICE
Andrew Miller, Manager - Employee & Organizational Development

QUEBEC

BESTAR
Chantal Larouche, Human Resources Director
Sylvain Roy, La Fraternité Nationale des Forestiers et Travailleurs d'Usine, locale 299

CAMCO
Coordonnatrice, formation developpement organizationel
Alain Leduc, Union President, Syndicat Canadien des Communications, Energie et Papier, locale 501

EMBALLAGES CONSUMERS
Patricia Séguin
Gaston Lemieux, Président du Syndicat des métallos, locale 525

KRAFT CANADA INC.
Josée Plouffe, Training Coordinator

KRUGER - TROIS RIVIERES
François Gélinas, Coordinator of Training & Industrial Relations
Yves Patry, President, SCEP, Local 136

NORANDA - DIVISION CCR
Yves Meurier, Président, Metallurgistes Unis d'Amerique locale 6887
Alain Gilbert, Président du Syndicat des métallos, locale 6131

NORANDA - DIVISION MATAGAMI
Lynne Henri, Conseillère en Prevention et en Formation

NORANDA INC.
Michel Charotte, Training Counsellor

NORBORD
Gino Trudel, General Manager
Alain Anglehart, Président du Syndicat Canadien d'Energie et du Papier, locale 3080

PRODUITS FORRESTIERS DONAHUE
Daniel Rodrigue, Personnel Supervisor
Alain Laprise, Corresponding Secretary, Fédération Travailler de Quebec

WESTON'S BAKERY
Sales Coordinator
Mr. Beauchemin, Union Representative for Central du Syndicat Democratique, locale 3008

NOVA SCOTIA

AVON FOODS INC.
Allie Craswell, Plant Manager
Russell Bent, Maintenance Mechanic, Chief Union Steward

TOWN OF TRURO, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Michael McGill, Town Engineer
Danny Cavanagh, Vice President, CUPE, Local 734

NEW BRUNSWICK

BRUNSWICK MINING & SMELTING CORPORATION
Roger Clinch, Director of Corporate Communications

CONSUMERS GLASS
Yvon Lapierre, Manager of Human Resources
Robert Richard, President of Aluminum Brick and Glassworkers' Union

T. S. SIMMS
Peter LeBlanc, Director of Human Resources
Gerri Martin, President, NSGEU / NUPGE, Brush Workers

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

CAVENDISH FARMS
Faye Vokey, Human Resources Supervisor
Betty Gillis, Program Participant

SEAMAN'S BEVERAGES
Doug Ellis, Purchasing Manager
Jeff Axesworthy, Program Participant

NEWFOUNDLAND

ATLANTIC CONSTRUCTION TRAINING CENTRE
Chesley Winsor, Board Member

FISHERY PRODUCTS INTERNATIONAL
Dolores Whiffen, Program Coordinator

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Appendix B

ABC CANADA
Survey of Workplaces with Basic Skills Programs

ID _____ Co. Name _____ Prov. _____

Community _____ Name _____ Title _____

1. Program Impacts

a) What motivated your workplace to start a basic skills program(s)?

_____

_____

_____

b) What were you hoping would be the outcome of the program(s)?

_____

_____

_____

c) Have you seen any of the outcomes you anticipated?

_____

_____

_____

d) Have you seen other changes or differences in the workplace that you think might be related to the program(s)?

_____

_____

_____

e) I'm going to read a list and ask you to answer yes, no, don't know, or not applicable. Do you think the basic skills program in your workplace has positively influenced ... (read first item)? What about (read second item)?

Self confidence	Employee morale	Communication	Team work
Problem solving	Ability to work more independently		Quality of work
Labour relations	Sense of loyalty	Retention of employees	
Ability to use technology	Productivity	Work effort	Promotability
Reduced error rates	Absenteeism / lateness	Health & safety	Customer satisfaction

Comments related to list:

_____

_____

f) Do you (or the workplace) evaluate the impact of the program(s) in a formal quantitative sense? (Do you formally measure the impact of any other type of training? If no, why not?)

_____

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2. Informant Ideas and Opinions

a) Do you think workplace basic skills programs are a good training investment? Why?

_____

_____

_____

b) We know that more than a third of Canadians have difficulty with printed material they may encounter in their workplace. We also know that very few workplaces offer basic skills education. (For example, only 2% of organizational training hours in Canada are spent on basic skills education.) Why do you think so few workplaces offer programs?

_____

_____

_____

c) As a workplace that does have a basic skills program, do you have any words of advice for workplaces that don't have programs?

_____

_____

_____

d) Thinking back to before your own program(s) started, do you remember what some of the barriers were to starting the program(s)?

_____

_____

_____

3. Program Profile

a) How long has your basic skills program(s) been running? _____

b) Who delivers the program(s)?

Community college | Local school board | Private Company | Community group

Labour organization | Private teacher | Peer tutors

c) What is the total number of hours of the class? _____

d) How do people become involved in the class?

Voluntary | Incentives (books, materials, tuition) | Mandatory

e) On whose time are the classes held?

Employers' time | Employees' time | Both

f) Is the basic skills program part of any other initiative (e.g., ISO certification, adapting to new technology)?

Yes (please specify) _____ No _____

g) How was the decision made to initiate the program(s)? (i.e., who was involved...?)

h) How is the program coordinated within the company?

Joint labour-management committee Training department

Individual appointed by workplace (please specify position)

4. Company Profile

a) What does your company / organization do?

b) How many people work there? (If the workplace is a branch of a larger entity, only record the number of employees at the branch).

c) Are any of the employees covered by a collective agreement? If yes, for which unions?

Is there anything you'd like to add before we end?

May I quote you by name?

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Workplace Education Centre
Centre d'éducation en milieu de travail

1 800 303 1004

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